

Ethno-linguistic situation in the forest zone of eastern Europe in the first centuries AD and the data of Jordanes' *Getica*

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Abstract

© 2018, Ural University Press. All rights reserved. The comparative analysis of folk-names lists from the Jordanes' *Getica* 116 ("Hermanaric's arctoi gentes" in author's reconstruction, information comes from the middle 4th century AD) and early Russian chronicles points towards the independent character of both sources showcasing dynamic changes in the ethnic and linguistic map of Eastern Europe between the 4th and the 10- 11th centuries. The first three names of the Hermanaric's list are addressed further. In Aunxis Vas must have been the predecessors of Vepsians, who lived on the south-eastern Ladoga lake shores and probably spoke a southern Lappish dialect. In Abroncas Merens are considered to have been the northernmost Merya groups along the northern bend of Volga (on the territories nowadays covered by the Rybinsk sea waters). Mordens in Miscaris are rather unlikely the direct ancestors of Mordvinians (Moksha and Erzya), but an Iranian-speaking group of Trans-Uralian origin, which had brought the Iranian name *mordi 'murderers' to the middle Volga in the 2nd- 3rd centuries AD. In the 4th century they lingered on as Iranian speaking or, although already assimilated by the local population, still kept their name. The land Miscar- must be identified with the Russian Meshchera, which was not what is known today as the Meshchera depression on the left bank of the Oka river, but the region between the lower Oka and the lower Sura rivers. Several problems of substrate toponymy of the upper and middle Volga region, including possible etymologies of the studied names, are also discussed.

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Keywords

Archaeology, Early Middle Ages, Erzya, Ethnic history, Jordanes' "*Getica*", Mari, Merya, Meshchera, Moksha, Mordva, Muroma, Onomastics, Vepsians, Volga region

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